

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 20-22 and amend claim 1 to read as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A ring binder mechanism for binding the sheets of loose leaves, the mechanism comprising:

an elongated spring plate that extends longitudinally and, in profile, has a shallow U-shaped configuration and opposite edges which extend substantially toward each other, said spring plate having at least one hole with a bushing therein for attachment of the ring binder mechanism to a file folder;

two parallel elongate hinge plates supported by said spring plate for pivotal toggle motion relative to the spring plate about a central hinge line, the hinge plates being mounted in parallel and retained by the opposite edges of the spring plate;

a plurality of rings for clasping said sheets of loose leaves, each of the rings comprising a pair of half ring elements ~~of circular cross-section~~ mounted on said hinge plates, with one half ring element of each pair being attached to one of the hinge plates and the other half ring element of the pair attached to the other hinge plate, with

the two half ring elements of each pair in substantial alignment, the pairs of half ring elements being movable with said hinge plates to toggle between an open position and a closed position and forming a substantially annular shape when in the close position; and

wherein free ends of the half ring of each pair elements form a nesting configuration when in the closed position, the free end of one half ring element of each pair having a centrally concave nesting portion and the free end of the other half ring element of the pair having a centrally convex nesting portion, said concave portion and said convex portion being symmetrical about an axis line of the respective ring elements of the pair, so that when the pair of half ring elements are in the closed condition, the free ends of the half ring elements are aligned to each other and form a surface-engagement so that the convex nesting portion and the concave nesting portion are nested together tightly; and

wherein the nesting portion with a centrally convex portion is formed in a free end of one half ring element of said pair of half ring elements, and the nesting portion with a centrally concave portion is formed in a free end of the other engaging half ring element, said convex nesting portion has an annular conical surface which extends

directly to a surface of a cylindrical rod forming the  
respective one half ring elements, said concave nesting  
portion has a conical hole that is formed from its external  
end surface, a maximum diameter of the conical hole on the  
external end surface is smaller than that of a cylindrical  
rod forming the respective other half ring element, a cone  
angle of said conical hole is smaller than that of the  
annular conical surface of the centrally protruding outwards  
nesting portion, such that when the half ring elements are  
in the closed condition, a connecting portion between the  
external end surface of the concave nesting portion and the  
conical hole thereof engages with the annular conical  
surface of the convex nesting portion, causing the convex  
nesting portion to nest centrally in the concave nesting  
portion.

2. (Previously Presented) A ring binder mechanism according to claim 1, said concave nesting portion has a conical hole that is formed in the free end of one half ring element, a diameter of the conical hole at its widest part being smaller than that of the respective half ring element.

3. (Previously Presented) A ring binder mechanism according to claim 1, wherein the convex nesting portion in

the free end of one half ring element in each respective pair has a substantially conical protruding portion with an outer diameter of a base of the protruding portion being smaller than the diameter of the respective half ring element.

4. (Previously Presented) A ring binder mechanism according to claim 3, wherein the opening of said concave nesting portion in the free end of one half ring element of each respective pair has a substantially conical hole that is formed from its external end surface and an internal cylindrical hole that is connected to said conical hole.

5. (Original) A ring binder mechanism according to claim 4, wherein the protruding portion of said convex nesting portion has a shape that consists of a cylindrical tip and an arc-shaped annular conical base portion, the opening of said concave nesting portion has a conical hole that is formed from its external end surface and an internal cylindrical hole that is connected to said conical hole.

6. (Original) A ring binder mechanism according to claim 3, wherein the protruding portion of said convex nesting portion has a cylindrical shape, the opening of said

concave nesting portion has a shape of an internal cylindrical hole.

7. - 9. (Canceled).

10. (Original) A ring binder mechanism according to claim 1, wherein two, three, four or more rings are provided in said ring binder mechanism.

11. (Previously Presented) A ring binder mechanism according to claim 1, wherein said rings are made of metal material.

12. (Original) A ring binder mechanism according to claim 1, wherein said rings are made of plastic material.

13. (Original) A ring binder mechanism according to claim 1, wherein said rings are formed integrally with said hinge plates.

14. - 22. (Canceled).

23. (Previously Added) A ring binder mechanism according to claim 1, wherein the pair of half ring elements of said ring binder mechanism form a circular ring.

24. (Previously Added) A ring binder mechanism according to claim 1, wherein one half ring element of said pair of half ring elements of said ring binder mechanism has a straight side.